

Message Text

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FM AMEMBASSY BRIDGETOWN

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 3461

INFO AMEMBASSY GEORGETOWN

AMEMBASSY KINGSTON

AMEMBASSY LONDON

AMEMBASSY NASSAU

AMEMBASSY PORT OF SPAIN

USMISSION USUN NEW YORK

CINCLANT FOR POLAD

C O N F I D E N T I A L BRIDGETOWN 2009

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINT, PGOV, SC

SUBUECT: NEVISIANS VOTE FOR SECESSION

REF: A) BRIDGETOWN A 30, 5/18/76

B) BRIDGETOWN A 21, 4/19/77

C) BRIDGETOWN 1921

SUMMARY: IN AN AUGUST 18 UNOFFICIAL REFERENDUM NEVISIANS VOTED 99 POINT 4 PERCENT FOR SECESSION FROM ST. KITTS. THE CASUAL APPROACH TO NEVISIAN SEPARATISM HERETOFORE TAKEN BY THE GOVERNMENTS OF ST. KITTS AND THE UK AND DISCUSSIONS BETWEEN THE TWO ON INDEPENDENCE FOR THE TWIN-ISLAND STATE MUST BE REVISED IN VIEW OF THE REFERENDUM RESULTS, IF VIOLENCE IS TO BE AVOIDED IN NEVIS AND IN ST. KITTS. PEACEFUL RESOLUTION OF THE DIFFERENCES BY THE PARTIES DIRECTLY CONCERNED REMAINS THE PRIMARY USG INTEREST. END SUMMARY.

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1. ACCORDING TO LEADERS OF THE NEVIS REFORMATION PARTY (NRP) 99-POINT 4-PERCENT OF THE NEVISIANS WHO CAST BALLOTS IN THE AUGUST 18 NRP-SPONSORED PLEBISCITE (REFTEL) VOTED IN FAVOR OF EEVISIAN SECESSION FROM THE ST. KITTS-NEVIS STATE ASSOCIATED WITH THE UK. THE NRP SAYS 4193 VOTED FOR SECESSION, 14 VOTED AGAINST AND THAT 13 BALLOTS WERE

SPOILED. THE TOTAL WAS IMPRESSIVE FOR THE ISLAND OF 9000 PEOPLE AND GREATLY EXCEEDED THE TOTAL VOTE ON NEVIS IN THE DECEMBER 1975 ELECTIONS THAT SENT NRP LEADERS SIMEON DANIEL AND IVOR STEVENS TO THE ST. KITTS-NEVIS HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES ON A PLATFORM BASED ON NEVISIAN SECESSION AND NO INDEPENDENCE FOR THE TWIN-ISLAND STATE.

2. NRP LEADERS DANIEL, STEVENS, NOMINATED HOUSE MEMBER URID SWANSTON AND NRP SECRETARY LEVI MORTON IMMEDIATELY ANNOUNCED THE NRP'S INTENTION TO SEND A LETTER TO ST. KITTS PREMIER ROBERT BRADSHAW TO NOTE THE RESULTS OF THE REFERENDUM AND TO GIVE NEVIS THE RIGHT TO SELF DETERMINATION. BRADSHAW, WHO EARLIER HAD TERMED THE REFERENDUM UNSANCTIONED AND WITHOUT ANY LEGAL VALIDITY, HAS HAD NO COMMENT ON THE VOTE AS YET, ALTHOUGH THE GOVERNMENT OPERATED RADIO STATION --ZIZ-- BROADCAST A POLICE WARNING BANNING PLANNED NRP STREET DEMONSTRATIONS TO CELEBRATE THE REFERENDUM RESULTS.

3. IN A TELEGRAM TO RADIO ANTILLES IN MONTserrat NRP LEADER DANIEL CLAIMED THAT ONE NEVISIAN WAS SHOT ON THE NIGHT OF AUGUST 17, BUT CHIEFS OF THE ISLANDS' DEFENSE FORCE, POLICE AND THE NEVIS HOSPITAL DENIED THE CHARGE. THE POLICE DID SAY ONE NEVISIAN HAD BEEN ARRESTED FOR ILLEGAL POSSESSION OF FIREARMS AND AMMUNITION.

4. IMMEDIATELY BEFORE THE NEVIS REFERENDUM, OPPOSITION PARTY
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LEADERS IN ST. KITTS ANNOUNCED THEIR INTENTIONS TO PETITION THE BRITISH GOVERNMENT FOR A REFERENDUM ON THE QUESTION OF INDEPENDENCE FOR ST. KITTS-NEVIS. PEOPLES ACTION MOVEMENT (PAM) PRESIDENT DR. KENNEDY SIMMONDS OUTLINED EIGHT OBJECTIONS TO INDEPENDENCE, INCLUDING A CHALLENGE TO THE MANDATE OF THE BRADSHAW GOVERNMENT AND OPPOSITION TO REPORTS OF ANY UNILATERAL MOVES BY BRADSHAW'S ST. KITTS LABOUR PARTY (SKLP) GOVERNMENT TO FORCE ST. KITTS-NEVIS INTO INDEPENDENCE. SIMMONDS NOTED THE PEOPLE OF ANGUILLA AND NEVIS HAVE THE RIGHT TO DECIDE THEIR OWN FUTURE AND SO DO THE PEOPLE OF ST. KITTS

5. COMMENT: WHAT STARTED WITH THE NRP TAKING 81 PERCENT OF THE NEVISIAN VOTE IN DECEMBER 1975 ELECTIONS AND CONTINUED WITH THE NRP WINNING ALL THE SEATS IN THE NEVIS LOCAL COUNCIL IN 1976 HAS NOW CULMINATED IN THE ALMOST UNANIMOUS ENDORSEMENT OF NEVISIAN SECESSION IN THE AUGUST 18, 1977, REFERENDUM. WHILE THE POLL HAS NO LEGAL VALIDITY, THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THE VOTE CANNOT BE LOST ON BRADSHAW OR THE UK. PAM'S CALL FOR A REFERENDUM ON THE ENTIRE INDEPENDENCE QUESTION FURTHER COMPLICATES THE UK DESIRE TO CONTINUE TO VIEW BRADSHAW'S 1975 ELECTION VICTORY AS EVIDENCE ENOUGH FOR

GRANTING ST. KITTS-NEVIS INDEPENDENCE IN THE NEAR FUTURE.

6. BRITISH OFFICIALS IN THIS REGION PROFESS TO HAVE LITTLE WORRY ABOUT THESE EVENTS. THE BRITISH HAVE VIEWED THE NRP ONLY AS THE ELECTED MINORITY OPPOSITION OF ST. KITTS-NEVIS, NOT THE UNANIMOUS REPRESENTATIVES OF A SEPARATE PEOPLE, A VIEW THE NRP CONSIDERS IT RAISON D'ETRE. THE BRITISH HERE HAVE NOT VARIED FROM THE LINE THAT THE NEVIS SECESSIONISTS ARE AN INTERNAL PROBLEM FOR THE BRADSHAW GOVERNMENT AND HAVE EMPHASIZED THAT IN NO WAY WILL THE UK GET INVOLVED MILITARILTY OR OTHERWISE, WHATEVER TRANSPIRES. THE BRITISH, HOWEVER, WOULD HAVE SERIOUS DIFFICULTY IN NOT INTERVENING IN THE EVENT OF PROTRACTED CIVIL STRIFE OR SERIOUS LOSS OF LIFE. THERE ARE INDICATIONS THAT THE BRITISH WOULD NOT MIND
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SEEING BRADSHAW OPT FOR U.D.I. AS A WAY OF RESOLVING WHAT IS A REAL MESS FOR THE UK. THE MOST SERIOUS RESPONSE TO U.D.I. BY THE BRITISH WOULD SEEM TO BE A HIATUS IN BRITISH AID BEFORE EVENTUAL ACCEPTANCE. BRADSHAW'S CONTINUED REFUSAL TO ACKNOWLEDGE THE LOSS OF ANGUILLA, HOWEVER, REMAINS A MAJOR OBSTACLE TO INDEPENDENCE OTHER THAN BY U.D.I.

7. VARIOUS SPOKESMEN FOR THE BRADSHAW GOVERNMENT HAVE FLATLY STATED THAT THE GOSK WILL NOT TOLERATE ANY ATTEMPT AT A PHYSICAL, I.E. VIOLENT, RESOLUTION OF THE NEVIS PROBLME. YET SHOULD THE GOSK AND THE UK IGNORE THE REFERENDUM RESULTS AND PAM'S CALL FOR A TWO-THIRDS VOTE OF APPROVAL FOR INDEPENDENCE BEFORE FURTHER STEPS ARE TAKEN IN THAT DIRECTION, VIOLENCE ON NEVIS AND ON ST. KITTS IS ALMOST CERTAIN TO OCCUR. LIKEWISE, SHOULD BRADSHAW AND THE UK ATTEMPT TO CONTINUE MOVES TOWARDS INDEPENDENCE, THE NRP AND PAM, WHICH BETWEEN THEM GAINED 37.5 PERCENT OF THE 1975 ELECTION VOTE (AND COULD BE EXPECTED TO INCREASE THEIR SHARE TO WELL OVER 40 PERCENT IN ANY VOTING IN THE NEAR FUTURE BECAUSE OF ECONOMIC AS WELL AS POLITICAL PROBLEMS FACED BY THE SKLP), WOULD FEEL JUSTIFIED TO ADOPT AN ACTIVE, I.E. PHYSICAL, OPPOSITION TO SUCH MOVES.

8. YES, THIS SEEMS A TEMPEST IN A TEA CUP AND YES, TO A CERTAIN EXTENT NEVIS IS AN EXAMPLE OF NATIONALISM GONE WILD, TO QUOTE A FORMER CAR COUNTRY DIRECTOR. BUT NEVISIANS HAVE DECIDED THAT THEY HAVE A RIGHT TO SELF DETERMINATION THAT DOES NOT INCLUDE EITHER CONTINUED ASSOCIATION WITH ST. KITTS OR INDEPENDENCE. THE NRP LEADERSHIP HAS BEEN QUITE CLEAR IN EXPLAINING AS ITS GOAL THE ATTAINMENT OF CROWN COLONY STATUS UNDER THE UK (LIKE ANGUILLA, MONTERRAT AND THE BRITISH VIRGIN ISLANDS) AND THAT AN INDEPENDENT NEVIS IS PREFERABLE ONLY TO CONTINUED ASSOCIA-
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TION WITH ST. KITTS.

9. THE PRIMARY USG INTEREST IS IN SEEING THE RESOLUTION
OF THESE DIFFERENCES WITHOUT MAJOR OCCURENCES OF VIOLENCE, FOR
BOTH HUMANITARIAN AND DEMOCRATIC REASONS. NON-VIOLENT
RESOLUTION OF THESE DIFFERENCES WILL PROBABLY DEMAND A
REVISION IN THE CURRENT APPROACH TO THE PROBLEM BY THE
UK AS OUTLINED IN PARA 6. END COMMENT.
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